

CONCUSSIONS AND HEAD INJURIES

The School Board recognizes that concussions and head injuries are commonly reported injuries in children and adolescents who participate in sports and other recreational activities. The Board acknowledges the risk of catastrophic injuries or death is significant when a concussion or head injury is not properly evaluated and managed. The Board recognizes that the majority of concussions will occur in “contact” or “collisions” sports. However, in order to ensure the safety of all District student-athletes, this policy will apply to all competitive athletic activities as identified by the administration.

Consistent with the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) and the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association (NHIAA), the District will utilize recommended guidelines, procedures and other pertinent information to inform and educate coaches, youth athletes, and parents/guardians of the nature and risk of concussions or head injuries, including the dangers associated with continuing to play after a concussion or head injury.

Annually, the district will distribute a head injury and concussion information sheet to all parents/guardians of student-athletes in competitive sport activities prior to the student-athlete's initial practice or competition.

All coaches, including volunteers, will complete training as recommended and/or provided by NHIAA, New Hampshire Department of Education and/or other pertinent organizations. Additionally, all coaches of activities will comply with NHIAA recommended procedures for the management of head injuries and concussions.

Athletic Director, Administrator, Coaches or Parent in Charge of Athletic Duties and Responsibilities

Updating: The athletic director or designee shall review any changes that have been made in procedures required for concussion and head injury management or other serious injury by consulting with the NHIAA or the District’s on-call physician, if applicable. If there are any updated procedures, they will be adopted and used for the upcoming school year. The Athletic Director should notify the Superintendent and implement the changed policy if more stringent than the existing policy. The Superintendent should mark-up the policy and present it to the Board via the Policy Committee.

Identified Sports: Identified sports include all NHIAA-sanctioned activities, including cheer/dance squads, and any other district-sponsored sports or activities as determined by the district.

Coach Training: All coaches shall undergo training in head injury and concussion identification and management at least once every two years by one of the following means: (1) through viewing the NHIAA sport-specific rules clinic; or (2) through viewing the NHIAA concussion clinic found on the MHSAs Sports Medicine page at www.mhsa.org.

Parent Information Sheet: A concussion and head injury information sheet shall be distributed to the student-athlete and the athlete's parent/guardian prior to the student-athlete's initial practice or competition for any identified sport. This information sheet may be incorporated into the parent permission sheet that allows students to participate in extracurricular athletics.

Coach’s Responsibility

A student-athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury or other serious injury in a practice or game shall be immediately removed from play.

Administrative Responsibilities: The Superintendent or his/her designee will keep abreast of changes in standards regarding concussion, explore staff professional development programs relative to concussions, and will explore other areas of education, training and programs.

Final Responsibility: The final decision for allowing a student-athlete to begin the Return to Play Protocol, and to return to play, rests with the parents of the students up to age 18, and with students 18 and older. Such final decision shall not be made until all other requirements for Return to Play Protocol or return to play have been satisfied to the satisfaction of the appropriate School District employees.

Protocol For Return To Play

No member of a school athletic team shall participate in any athletic event or practice the same day he or she is injured and in the judgment of the school's trainers or medical officials:

1. Exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors attributable to a concussion; or
2. Has been diagnosed with a concussion.

No member of a school athletic team shall return to participate in an athletic event or training on the days after he/she experiences a concussion unless all of the following conditions have been met:

1. The student no longer exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion, at rest or with exertion;
2. The student is asymptomatic during, or following periods of supervised exercise that is gradually intensifying; and
3. The student receives a written medical release from a licensed health care provider.
4. The parents and guardians of students under age 18, or the student, if age 18 or older, signs an acknowledgement that a person suffering a concussion is especially vulnerable to greater injury or even death from return to student sports before full recovers from such concussion, and that in the opinion of the person(s) signing the acknowledgement, the student is fully recovered from such concussion

The District may limit a student-athlete's participation to "Graduated Return to Play" standards and protocol, as determined by the student's treating health care provider.

Concussion Awareness and Education

The administration will include concussion awareness and education into the district's physical education and/or health education curriculum. The administrative decision will take into account all relevant considerations, including time, resources, access to materials, and other pertinent factors.

Academic Issues in Concussed Students

In the event a student is concussed, regardless of whether the concussion was a result of a school-related or non-school-related activity, school district staff should be mindful that the concussion may affect the student's ability to learn. In the event a student has a concussion, that student's teachers will be notified. Teachers should report to the school nurse if the student appears to have any difficulty with academic tasks that the teacher believes may be related to the concussion. The school nurse will notify the student's parents and treating physician. Administrators and district staff will work to establish a protocol and course of action to ensure the student is able to maintain his/her academic responsibilities while recovering from the concussion.

Section 504 accommodations may be developed in accordance with applicable law and board policies.

Adopted: December 13, 2012
Board Review/Approval: June 12, 2014